

# MA Senate Passes Auto 'Right-To-Repair' Bill

Shannon Young, Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Massachusetts lawmakers are reviving the debate over whether to require car manufacturers to provide software needed to diagnose car trouble to independent repair shops and vehicle owners, but supporters of the measure also want voters to decide this fall if it doesn't pass.

The state Senate passed the measure late Thursday night. It now heads to the House of Representatives.

The bill previously passed the Senate in 2010, but failed to come up in the House. It calls for auto manufacturers that sell cars in Massachusetts to provide access to their diagnostic and repair information system through a universal software system that can be accessed by dealers and independent repairs shops, starting in 2015.

Security-related information would not be made available to owners and independent repair shops.

Supporters say the bill would bring savings and convenience to consumers, repair shops and even dealerships when it comes to repairing trade-in vehicles.

Art Kinsman, a spokesman for the Massachusetts Right to Repair Coalition, which represents more than 1,000 Massachusetts mechanics supporting the legislation, said it would provide mechanics and car owners the ability to purchase all repair information. As a result, he said, consumers will have more options for service, including do-it-yourself repairs.

"If they can't get all of the information, do they ever really own their car?" he said.

But opponents argue that the information is already available to owners and mechanics, and it's up to the person or shop to invest in the tools and training.

Daniel Gage, a spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, said individuals have always had the "right to repair," and many independent repair shops have the tools and software codes to fix a wide array of vehicles.

He said manufacturers must require dealerships to have updated tools and software to be "service ready," but that they have no control over small, independent shops.

Additionally, there is no guarantee that cars made before the 2015 start date would be repaired at independent shops, Gage said, as they would not be included in the universal system as proposed under the bill.

"It all sounds great, it sounds like a magic wand," he said, noting that if passed, the legislation could lead manufacturers to redesign cars across the board in an effort

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Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

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to comply with the Massachusetts law, resulting in higher sticker prices.

Gage also questioned whether the measure would result in lower repair costs, saying the bill has no provision to ensure that any savings are actually passed on to consumers.

Kinsman said the bill has a wide range of support from state residents and that his organization is working to gather enough signatures to ensure the measure will be on the November ballot if the Legislature doesn't pass it.

"We want to make sure that one way or another, consumers have their say," he said.

**Source URL (retrieved on 10/25/2014 - 5:49am):**

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